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Troopers Working to Save Lives

Holiday Enforcement Plans Include Extra Patrols, Aggressive DUI Enforcement

MONTGOMERY – Motorists can expect extra patrols and sobriety checkpoints statewide during the Christmas and New Year's holidays as Alabama state troopers work to ensure safety for holiday travelers. Public Safety Director Col. J. Christopher Murphy said troopers especially will focus on curtailing impaired driving during the holidays.

"Troopers are in the business of saving lives, and we take that very seriously," Murphy said. He urged motorists to strictly obey all traffic laws and avoid impaired driving at all costs. He said troopers also will target other violations that contribute to crashes, including speeding, following too closely and improper passing.

Following recent reports of a 10 percent decline in traffic deaths nationwide in 2008, Murphy cited an even sharper decline — 18 percent — in trooper-reported traffic deaths in Alabama during 2008. He said DPS's goal is to build on that success through the holidays and to year's end.

"Through special safety initiatives like 'Take Back Our Highways' and every day, routine patrols, Alabama's troopers have made a real contribution to roadway safety in the state," said Murphy. "Along with Alabama's local law enforcement partners, their efforts have made a positive impact on driving behavior. The result is many lives saved that otherwise would have been lost."

During a pre-Christmas checkpoint campaign Dec. 17-24, troopers working with local law enforcement agencies will conduct daily checkpoints in each of the department's nine troop areas. They will utilize DPS's fleet of BAT-mobiles — nine trucks equipped with breath alcohol testing equipment — at many of the checkpoint locations. During a similar initiative held before the Thanksgiving holiday, troopers recorded more than 2,200 traffic citations, including 75 DUIs. Grant funding for the specialized BAT-mobiles was awarded by Gov. Bob Riley and administered by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. Testing equipment was provided by the Department of Forensic Sciences.

"The holidays are a time of joy and celebration, yet impaired drivers pose a deadly threat during this joyous time," said Murphy. "If holiday celebrations include alcohol, I strongly advocate designating a nondrinking driver or making other plans to avoid the tragic consequences of impaired driving." He also reminded motorists that the use of seat belts and child restraints is often the best defense in the event of an alcohol-related crash.

The troopers' checkpoint campaign coincides with another preholiday safety campaign designed to remind motorists to refrain from drinking and driving, buckle up and obey all traffic laws: National Holiday Lifesaver Weekend, Dec. 19-21.

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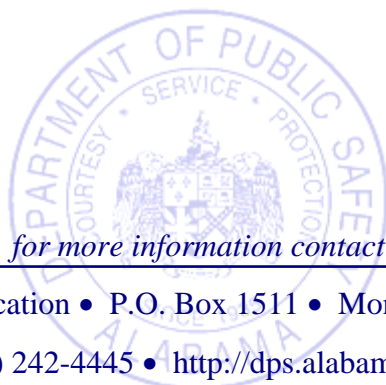
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The 102-hour Christmas travel period begins at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 24, and ends at midnight Sunday, Dec. 28. In 2007, 15 people died in traffic crashes on Alabama roadways during the 102-hour Christmas period. Alcohol was a factor in at least seven of the deaths, and all but one of the vehicle occupants killed were not using seat belts.

The 102-hour New Year's travel period extends from 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 31, through midnight Sunday, Jan. 4, 2009. Last year, 11 people died in traffic crashes in the state during the 102-hour New Year's travel period. At least four of the deaths involved alcohol, and six of the crash victims were not using seat belts.

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